

12. OCCURRENCE OF THE WOODCOCK (*SCOLOPAX RUSTICOLA*)
AT LOW ALTITUDES

The woodcock's winter migration has been an enigma. It is said to fly non-stop from the Himalayas to the Nilgiris and associated hills in the south, and back again, not stopping in the lowlying area enroute.

On 3-iii-79 while driving through the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, we observed a sambar kill (the work of wild dogs) on the bed of a jungle stream, a tributary of the Moyar river. We stopped our vehicle and approached the stream on foot. It was 10 a.m. I was in the lead and walking along the stream margin when I put up a woodcock which took off and flew across the stream, which was quite open, and alighted on the ground near a small thicket and ran into it in typical woodcock fashion. I know a woodcock when I see one, having taken part in woodcock beats on the Nilgiri upper plateau (2000 m). To make sure I summoned my father, an experienced woodcock shot, and

while he watched I crossed the stream and beat the woodcock out of cover. We both watched the bird as it flew away, and it was unmistakably a woodcock.

The elevation of the area is around 900 m, and it is only 15 to 20 km from the upper plateau of the Nilgiris as the crow flies (or rather as the woodcock flies). Its flight did not show any signs of injury. We looked around in the immediate vicinity for the tell tale marks woodcocks leave—the honey-comb patterned probe marks left by the bird's bill in mud. There was none. March is the month for the woodcock's return migration. All things considered this appeared to be just a stopover and not its winter habitat. But why did it have to rest after such a short journey, or was it commuting between the upper and lower plateaux especially since it was considered a poor year for woodcocks on the upper plateau.

CANOWIE,
COONOR-643 101,
NILGIRIS,
March 21, 1979.

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13. OCCURRENCE OF *DICRURUS PARADISEUS LOPHORHINUS*
(VIEILLOT) IN GOA (INDIA)

The Ceylon Crested Black Drongo, *Dicrurus paradiseus lophorhinus* is known to be an endemic race of Sri Lanka. It is 'confined to and moderately plentiful in the wet zone and lower hills but ascending Adam's peak to at least c. 1700 m (Henry)' as quoted by Ali and Ripley (p. 141, 1972).

While working on a recent bird collection

from Goa, stored in the Zoological Survey of India, we came across a specimen of a female drongo conforming to the description of the race *lophorhinus* of Sri Lanka. The specimen, Z.S.I. Reg. No. 34088 was collected by Dr. V. C. Agrawal, 2 km south of Poinquinim Forest Rest House, Canacona, south Goa, on 22 December 1968 in a secondary

teak plantation. According to the collector, this was one of the two, one chasing the other.

The measurements are as follows: Wing—141 mm; Bill (from skull)—36 mm, (from feathers) 30 mm and (from nostril) 20 mm; and Tarsus—26 mm. Tail (Central)—123 mm and (outer) 212 mm.

Excepting the outer tail feathers, the measurements of all the parts are akin to that of the Ceylonese birds. The maximum length of outer tail feathers were given 182 mm (Baker, p. 373). But in one specimen it measures 196 mm when in moult (Ali and Ripley, p. 141).

Baker (1924) gave it species rank and kept it under a separate genus *Dissemurlus* and mentioned its distribution to be Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and south Travancore (Kerala).

Salim Ali (p. 277, 1969) writes 'The statement of Stuart Baker (Fauna 2:373-4) implying that *D. p. lophorhinus* is common in 'Travancore' and another in NIDIFICATION (2: 339) that 'it has been found breeding freely and in great numbers by J. Stewart (in Travancore)' are certainly incorrect. There are

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,
34 CHITTARANJAN AVENUE,
CALCUTTA 700 012,
November 17, 1978.

no other records or any skins from Kerala to confirm them.

The authenticity of its occurrence in India is now confirmed.

This record immediately raises the question as to the taxonomic status of this species. The collection of *Dicrurus p. paradiseus* by Grubh and Ali (1976) and by the Zoological Survey of India (1968-69, 1973 and 1978), from this area and the occurrence of *D. p. lophorhinus* from the same area as represented by this present specimen necessitates further study of this aspect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Director, Zoological Survey of India for enabling us to visit Bombay Natural History Society. In addition, we must acknowledge our sincere thanks to the Bombay Natural History Society for providing necessary facilities to work in their laboratory. Dr. Salim Ali, Shri J. C. Daniel, Dr. Robert B. Grubh and Shri H. Abdulali took special interest in this problem and were of assistance in preparing this note.

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